

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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TAGS: PGOV, MARR, RP, US

SUBJECT: PRESS COMMENTARY ON BASES NEGOTIATIONS

1. FOLLOWS TEXT OF FRANCISCO DE LEON COLUMN (TIMES JOURNAL, JULY 4) WHICH ALLEGES THAT U.S. IS PROCRASTINATING ON RESUMPTION OF BASES NEGOTIATIONS AND WHICH STRESSES CRIMINAL JURISDICTION ISSUES INCLUDING AMERICAN SERVICEMEN "SLIPPING OUT OF THE COUNTRY TO AVOID TRIAL":

2. BEGIN TEXT. WHEN WILL THE UNITED STATES RESUME THE SUSPENDED BASES TALKS?

THIS WAS THE INEVITABLE QUESTION ASKED BY THOSE WHO READ THE RECENT WASHINGTON REPORT QUOTING U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS RICHARD HOLBROOKE THAT THE U.S. WILL RETAIN ITS BASES HERE.

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HOLBROOKE, WHO WAS IDENTIFIED IN THE REPORT AS THE LEADING SPOKESMAN OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT, SAID NO NEW THINGS. WHAT HE SAID WAS MERELY A REHASH OF WHAT OTHER AMERICAN LEADERS HAD SAID BEFORE.

THERE ARE CONFLICTING THEORIES ON THE BASES QUESTION ADVANCED BY MANY U.S. SOURCES. AN AMERICAN DIPLOMAT POSTED

IN A SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRY HAD ADVOCATED THE SCRAPPING OF THE RP BASES AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE U.S. MILITARY LINE TO GUAM.

HOWEVER, THIS SEEMS TO BE A MINORITY OPINION. FOR THE CONSENSUS OF THE MORE RESPONSIBLE AMERICAN LEADERS CLEARLY FAVORS THE CONTINUED USE BY THE U.S. OF THE BASES HERE. THEY POINT OUT THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE TO REMAIN A PACIFIC POWER AND MAINTAIN ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IN ASIA. THE U.S. CANNOT AFFORD, AT THIS TIME, TO RENOUNCE ITS POSITION IN ASIA AND UPSET THE POWER BALANCE IN THE AREA.

THUS, HOLBROOKE SAID NOTHING NEW AND DID NOT INDICATE WHEN THE U.S. WILL ASK THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT FOR A RESUMPTION OF THE SUSPENDED BASES TALKS. PRESIDENT CARTER HAS SEEMINGLY GIVEN THE QUESTION LOW PRIORITY IN THE ORDER OF PROBLEMS THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN TACKLING.

THE PHILIPPINE POSITION IS CLEAR. IT MAINTAINS ITS SOVEREIGN POWER OVER THE BASES AND WOULD WANT TO BE PAID RENTALS FOR THE LEASE OF THESE AREAS. THE PHILIPPINES HAS ALWAYS BEEN READY TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS ANY TIME THE U.S. IS READY.

IN THE MEANTIME, WHILE THE U.S. PROCRASTINATES ON THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BASES ISSUE, ACCUSED AMERICAN MILITARY SERVICEMEN HAVE BEEN SLIPPING OUT OF THE COUNTRY TO AVOID TRIAL. THE LATEST TO FLEE THE COUNTRY WAS COL. BOYD HENSLEY. THE AMERICAN COLONEL LEFT DESPITE A DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE PETITION THAT HE BE KEPT IN THE COUNTRY TO FACE TRIAL. THERE ARE OTHER AMERICAN MILITARY SERVICEMEN WHO HAD SNEAKED OUT OF THE COUNTRY BEFORE THEIR COURT CASES WERE DECIDED. IN 1970, A CLARK FIELD BASE COMMANDER LEFT THE PHILIPPINES AFTER HE WAS FOUND GUILTY OF CONTEMPT OF COURT AND SENTENCED TO AN INDETERMINATE JAIL TERM.

IN THE BASES RENEGOTIATIONS REMEDIES SHOULD BE ADOPTED TO AVOID SIMILAR OCCURANCES.

ONE OF THE ISSUES LEFT UNSETTLED WHEN THE TALKS WERE SUSPENDED LATE LAST YEAR WAS THE QUESTION OF CRIMINAL JURISDICTION. IT HAS BEEN A TICKLISH ISSUE BECAUSE IT INVOLVES THE GRANT OF EXTRA-TERRITORIAL RIGHTS TO FOREIGN SOLDIERS IN THE COUNTRY.

UNDER THE PRESENT AGREEMENT, THE FLIGHTS OF INDICTED GIS CANNOT EFFECTIVELY BE STOPPED. AND THEIR PREMATURE AND

SUSPICIOUS DEPARTURES HAVE ONLY CAUSED IRRITANTS IN RP-US RELATIONS.

IN THE JULY 4TH CELEBRATION TODAY, CLARK FIELD, ONE OF THE TWO PHILIPPINE BASES USED BY U.S. MILITARY UNITS HERE, ANNOUNCED THAT IT IS NOT HOLDING ITS TRADITIONAL OPEN HOUSE. IT IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE U.S. AIR FORCE BASE IN PAMPANGA HAS CLOSED ITS GATES TO FILIPINO GUESTS ON WHAT USED TO BE A GLORIOUS FOURTH. WHATEVER MAY BE THE REASON OF BASE AUTHORITIES THE DECISION WILL ALWAYS BE CONSTRUED AS A REFLECTION OF THE DETERIORATION RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. END TEXT.

3. COMMENT:
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(A) REFERENCE TO CLARK CO COL. HENSLEY IS IN ERROR; WRITER PERHAPS MEANT TO CITE DEPARTURE OF CMDR. VERPLAETSE ON JUNE 29. HENSLEY IS DUE FOR ROTATION MID-JULY.

(B) WE ARE INFORMED THAT ESSENTIAL REASON FOR CLARK'S NOT HOLDING TRADITIONAL JULY 4 OPEN HOUSE WAS ENERGY AND COST SAVINGS.
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Message Attributes

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